

# The History of Penet Square

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Brief Sketch of the Life, Character  
and Operations of Peter Penet.

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An address delivered on the occasion of  
the observance of the Centennial of  
Jefferson County, New York, at Water-  
town, N. Y., on June 22, 1905,

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By IRVIN W. NEAR,  
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# History of Penet Square

## And Herein a Brief Sketch of the Life, Characteristics and Operations of Peter Penet.

MR. CHAIRMAN:

The subject you bid me discourse, relates to a territory larger than the oldest republic in the world, larger than either Athens or Rome in the days of their greatest power; and of the same size as the original District of Columbia: a territory given as a gratuity or a benificence to a person who lived by his wits rather than by any service of real value; then a trackless wilderness, now a land teeming with productive farms, thriving towns and attractive homes of a prosperous and intelligent people.

A line extending due west from Split Rock—a sunless and reputed bottomless chasm—in the town of Westport, Essex County, on the west shore of Lake Champlain, terminates at the confluence of French Creek—the Weteringhraguentere of the aboriginal occupants—with the River St. Lawrence, in the town of Clayton, Jefferson County, formed the norther boundary of the territory of that powerful league of Indians, who dominated and controlled most of the country between the Mississippi and the Atlantic, known as the Iroquois, and also the southern limit of the land of the Algonquins, an aggressive and warlike nation who mostly inhabited and dominated the whole country to the north, always at war with their superior southern neighbors.

Long before the advent of the white man into the state of New York, fortified places had been built by the Algonquins at either end of the division line, notably at the western terminous where it intersects the river then known and called Cataraquy or Iroquois, now the St. Lawrence; early Jesuit Relations have a misty account of deserters from the French with Jacques Cartier at Montreal, joined the Algonquins, participated in their wars against the Iroquois, taught them to build forts at either end and along the before mentioned division line; there is some probability for this tradition, because each terminal is on the same parallel of latitude, to ascertain this required knowledge the Indians did not possess, it is fair to suppose the French renegades did. This was contemporaneous with the origin of the confederacy of the Iroquois, by the mysterious Hiawatha. The Oneida Indians, one of the constituent nations of the Iroquois, whose domain was invaded, resisted this invasion of their territory, attacked the western outpost, and after

a desperate battle, lasting a number of days, drove out the invaders, destroyed the work, and occupied the country farther east; from this time the place was known as Weteringhraguentre—the place of the destroyed fallen fort. The eastern termination of this line is the location of the naval engagement between the Americans under the command of General Benedict Arnold, and the English under Sir Guy Carlton, in October, 1776, by which the British plan of the invasion of the colonies by way of Lake Champlain was frustrated, but again undertaken by Burgoyne the next year with disastrous results at Saratoga.

From the place of the "Fallen Fort", the territory of the Oneidas extended south, to a point on Wood Creek, the outlet of Oneida Lake, and from thence, to and along the "property line," to the Delaware branch of the Mohawk—the Delaware River.

For the services rendered to the Oneidas by Peter Penet, and as a benevolence to him from them, the Oneidas gave to the same Peter Penet, a tract of land, ten miles square, lying to the northward of the Oneida Lake, wherever he shall elect and locate the same; and by the subsequent treaty of cession made by these Indians, at Fort Stanwix, in 1788, this reservation was made, and a grant therefor provided.

Who was this Peter Penet? He was an adventurer, a speculator, a promotor with a keen look-out for the main chance, unscrupulous in conduct, of small, if any, financial ability; of great personal energy and inordinate vanity, withal a great liar and a graceless rascal.

Penet was a merchant in Nantes, France. He first came to this country December 10, 1775, landed at Providence, R. I., on a vessel sailed by Capt. Rhodes, who had been sent to the West Indies for powder; Penet was then in Hayti, and with a fellow traveler, one DePlaine, came from Cape Francois, bearing letters and credentials of character, and proposed to undertake to supply arms and munitions of war to the colonies or to congress, through his alleged business connections in France. Governor Clark, of Rhode Island, received him favorably, and gave him a letter of introduction to General Washington, then at Cambridge, Mass. He immediately went to headquarters, and was very courteously received by Washington, who with great care and caution referred him to Congress, without committing himself to any endorsement of his proposals. However, his reception by the General was quite flattering; he was sent at public expense to confer with Congress, then in session in Philadelphia. Washington also gave him letters to Governor Trumbull, of Connecticut, requesting carriages be provided for conveying him to his destination. Governor Trumbull examined his proposals, and added his own approval. He left New Haven on December 24, 1775. Upon arriving at Philadelphia, sought and obtained upon the letters of recommendations he bore, a hearing before Congress, who approved his plans and proposals, and by its resolutions, the secret committee executed a contract with him, under the name of Penet & Company, for the supply of a large amount of arms, ammunition and military stores from France.

He made like proposals to the Committees of Safety of the Colonies of New York and Virginia. He contracted and agreed to furnish to Virginia twelve 6 pound cannon.

Having completed his arrangements, Penet left America in March, 1776, in a vessel hired on purpose for sending him and other French adventurers to France. He was intrusted with letters to our agents abroad, coming direct from the field of action, that was then exciting great interest through all Europe, was able to give detailed information of great value to the colonies. But except his contracts, he returned empty handed; it required skill and diplomacy of no mean ability to meet the emergencies that arose in attempting to fulfill his contracts. M. Dubourg, writing to Dr. Franklin in June, 1776, says: "Mr .Penet appears a faithful, active, intelligent man, and very much the connoisseur in arms of every kind, but I have been led to think that your committee not knowing him sufficiently to trust with large pecuniary funds would only engage to repay amply his advances, and he is not in a position to do great things in that way, however good his disposition is therefor. This is what retards all his operations which might have been much accelerated if you had somebody here duly authorized to make bargains and to pass engagements in the name of the thirteen United Colonies, on terms which would be readily owned agreeable."

He was first received with the caution due a stranger in a delicate negotiation, when the actions, sympathies and intentions of the French government, were yet concealed under an assumed reserve; though M. Dubourg assured him of the favorable wishes of the court and nation in behalf of the colonies. Dubourg was convinced by the intelligence, manners and actions of Penet, that he could confide in him, and upon his judgment Penet was called from Nantes to be secretly presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs for consultation upon the condition, resources and prospects of the Colonies. Through this event he managed to procure and forward a considerable amount of arms and munitions under his contract.

Penet, thereupon, and on August 3, 1776, wrote Washington: "I assure you of the success of my operations in France. You need not fear the want of ammunition. I have found means to furnish your armies and to provide for your garrisons." In the same letter he implored Washington to appoint him his first aid-de-camp, and that he would permit him to wear the uniform, ribbon and decoration of that position. He also presented his respects to Madame Washington. On October 7, Washington addressed the President of Congress, endorsing this letter, asking leave to grant the request, which was on the eleventh of that month done by a resolution appointing Peter Penet, an Aide-de-Camp by brevet. At this time it does not seem possible that Washington and the Continental Congress could be induced to comply with the request of this wily, insinuating adventurer. Later on it will be seen that there were other victims of his cunning pretensions.

Afterwards the Commissioners of the Colonies in France, became



satisfied that Penet could not advantageously perform his contract. On June 17, 1777, they wrote the Secret Committee: "We think it advisable that you should so far be on your guard with respect to M. Penet, as not to deviate from the original contract made with him; we cannot learn that he is a person of substance, but he appears to be active, industrious and attentive to your interests. He is connected with the house of M. Gruel, in Nantes. We do not know the terms of his connection, or how far M. Gruel is answerable. It seems to us that those houses that are connected with Great Britain are to be avoided." On February 11, 1777, Arthur Lee wrote to the Secret Committee of Congress: "Penet has not such recommendations or substance as he could wish; they are of a low order."

About two years later M. Penet petitioned Congress for its encouragement in the establishment of an armory to manufacture fire-arms, side-arms and other army equipments. On January 2, 1779, the committee to whom this petition had been referred, made a favorable report. They proposed to contract for 100,000 muskets and bayonets at 26½ livres each, of which one-fifth were to be delivered in two years and the balance in six and seven years. The arrangement was never carried out because of the inability of Penet to meet his part of the engagement.

Pennsylvania gave him an order for arms, munitions and standards for the use of her troops, and for a seal with the state arms engraved thereon. In a letter dated at Nantes, May 20, 1780, apologizing for his delay in filling the order, and explaining the cause, which had no real foundation, he solicits the appointment of State Agent for that State. This was not granted, nor was his undertaking ever completed.

Penet is next found operating on the confidence of the Governors of New York and Pennsylvania, by offering for sale some—as he asserted—new and valuable discoveries in explosives, and also a cheap metal for sheathing ships, and a preparation or varnish to preserve iron from rust. His attempts were abortive.

Soon after, Penet was employed by the State of Virginia to borrow money in France. No record or statement can be found of his success in this employment. On December 14, 1782, Dr. Franklin wrote: "Penet, who is employed by Virginia to borrow money here, is broke and absconded; his creditors are all worrying me with their complaints. I have nothing to do with his affairs. We have put faith in every adventurer who pretended to have influence here, and who, when he arrived, had none but what your appointment gave him."

The next we find of this fellow, is in 1783, when his name appears in the Albany County Clerk's office, as a purchaser of a lot of land in Schenectady for £1,050, being a dwelling and store. In 1787, he appears as a trader with the Oneidas in their village near Oneida Lake, among these people he acquired a great ascendancy; he pretended to them, that because of their adherence to the cause of the Colonies during the Revolution, alone of all the confederacy of the Iroquois,



that the United States would richly reward them for their loyalty, and that he was commissioned to provide for this. In the most extravagant language, Penet pretended to these Indians to be a representative of the King of France, who admired their loyalty to his ally, and would make them all valuable presents therefor; and that he and the Marquis De LaFayette, were commissioned by the French king to distribute these gifts. He established a code of laws for their government, in which, in all of their disputes he was to be the final arbitrator. He largely assisted in fixing the boundary between their lands and the Mohawks—the new “property line.” So great was the confidence of the Oneidas in Penet, that the Commissioners of the State of New York to determine the territorial claims of the Oneidas found it both convenient and expedient to consult Penet, and ask his aid and advice to determine the territorial claims of the Oneidas in the treaty on September 12, 1788, at Fort Stanwix, and solicited his aid in promoting the measures there accomplished. Penet was one of the witnesses to the treaty with the Onondagas, signed at the same time. At this time and place the Commissioners held a treaty with the Oneidas, whose claims upon the favor of the state was much stronger on account of their services during the late war, than any other of the five nations; Penet impressed upon these Indians that such favor came through his influence with the representatives of the State; upon this occasion, the Oneida orator said to the Commissioners, whatever communication we shall make here, must be made for us by Good Peter, the French Gentleman—pointing to Penet—he is our father, and we request you will make him the channel of your communication of whatever you have to say to us; he is a just and righteous man, he will deceive us in nothing, but will deliver to us the very truth. Had it not been for him we should have been ruined; because of this confidence and a desire to reward Penet for his kindnesses and services, the Oneida Treaty of September 22, 1788, was made to embrace the following stipulation and declaration: “And further, that the People of the State of New York, shall, as a beneficence and benevolence from the Oneidas to Peter Penet, and in return for services rendered by him to this nation, grant to the said Peter Penet, of the said ceded lands lying to the northwest of Oneida Lake, a tract ten miles square, wherever he shall elect the same.” subsequently the interest of Penet in the interests of the Oneidas was not so manifest. These people became divided in their adherence to and belief in Penet; the sachems and many of the warriors were with Penet, while the chiefs, some of the warriors and many of the women were opposed; in consequence a fierce contention waged; Penet was supported by Col. Louis Cook, a St. Regis Indian, who assisted the Colonies in the Revolution, he served with the Americans in the war of 1812-1815; he died at the Buffalo Creek Reservation, soon after, leaving an intelligent and reliable family of sons and daughters, from whom a considerable amount of the recitals herein, is derived. Rev. Samuel

Kirkland exploded the pretensions of Penet, he left quite a voluminous narrative of the operations of the wily Frenchman. To appease the wrath of his opponents, Penet went to New York, as he told them, to receive and bring back the promised presents from the King of France; the Indians anxiously awaited his return, but he never came back. His deluded friends remained faithful to him, fierce contentions arose between his adherents and opponents, which long continued, existing at this day.

The plan of government of the Oneidas, by Penet, is still shown, it is an interesting and curious production. Given at the Great House of Scanondoe, October 25, 1788; and of our New Government, the First; it recites, "The Honourable Peter Penet, Esquire, our true and trusted friend, adopted and chosen advisor and agent forever, to act for us and for the good and happiness of our nation, and these articles are executed solemnly in his presence." These articles were signed and sealed by twenty-eight Oneidas, four of whom were females, in the presence of P. Penet, Edward Johnston, interpreter, P. Chevalier Goyer, James Baudron, Vaumane de Fonclaire, J. F. LeBon, Colonel Louis Cook, Margaritte Guarinda, Lathani Rottgienher. Two men mentioned in the second article of the instrument to transact the national business, when approved by Penet, are Col. Louis Cook and Peter Otsiquette, who signed the articles as one of the Chiefs of the Oneida Nation; he is supposed to be the "Good Peter" who so carefully looked after Penet's interests at and before the treaty of Fort Stanwix, for the ten mile square tract. Before his departure for New York, as he told the Indians, for the King's presents, Penet carefully examined the locality where he would elect to locate his domain, and shrewdly decided that as much as possible of it should adjoin the River St. Lawrence, because transportation of the productions of his tract would be more available, than from any other channel known to him, and left directions for the execution of his wishes. In making this selection he was accompanied by the Louis Cook, before mentioned, who by reason of his former life among the St. Regis tribe, was acquainted with all the country contiguous to the St. Lawrence. In 1793, Skenandoe, a venerable Oneida Chief, then being above eighty years old, informed some French agents sent out to examine this tract, and investigate Penet's claims, that this tract was the best located land in the Oneida country, that it was ten miles square, had been given to Penet for his services and magnificent promises of great trade with France and America, but that he had run away from the country, without paying his debts or keeping his promises, that he was a great liar, and had sold the land for ten cents an acre.

Penet, by an instrument in writing, dated January 23, 1789, made John Duncan, of Schenectady, N. Y., his attorney for the purpose of locating this tract, as selected, apply for, and receive a survey and patent therefor, from the state, in pursuance of the Oneida treaty of cession, and to sell and dispose of such parts, for such sums as he could

get. Immediately thereafter Penet sailed for France, with the purpose of fixing some scheme by which he might realize from the results of his impositions upon the Indians; it is not known that his schemes materialized. He never returned to this country. He died in France before the close of that year, without wife or children.

Pursuant to the application of John Duncan as the attorney for Penet, to the Commissioners of the Land Office of this State, for the location and survey of the Penet land, the Surveyor General made the following: "Pursuant to a resolution of the Commissioners of the Land Office, dated the eighth day of August, 1789, I have laid out for Peter Penet, of the lands ceded by the Oneida Nation of Indians to the People of the State of New York, by their deed of cession, dated the twenty-second day of September, 1788, lying to the northward of the Oneida Lake, a tract of ten miles square, as elected by John Duncan, agent for the said Peter Penet: Beginning on the southeast side of the River St. Lawrence, at the mouth of a creek, called by the Indians Weteringhraguentere, said to be about twelve miles below an island in the said river, called Carleton or Bucks Island, which place of beginning is the northwest corner of the lands claimed by the said Oneida Nation, and ceded as aforesaid, and running thence east eight hundred chains, then ~~South~~ eight hundred chains, then west eight hundred chains, then ~~North~~ eight hundred chains, to the place of beginning containing sixty-four thousand acres.

Given under my hand, at the city of New York, the eighteenth day of November, 1789.

SIMEON DE WITT,,

Surveyor General.

The foregoing described lands were conveyed to Peter Penet, by the People of the State of New York, by a patent, dated November 19, 1789, by George Clinton, Governor. Examined, approved and confirmed by Robert Harper, Dep. Secy, November 19, 1789.

The said patent reserved to the grantor, all gold and silver mines, and five acres of every hundred acres, for highways; and was made upon the condition, that within seven years from January first, 1799, there shall be one actual settler for every six hundred and forty acres of land.

This Patent was recorded in the office of the Secretary of State in Book of Patents 21, on Page 407.

On July 13, 1790, John Duncan as the attorney for Penet sold the whole square to James Watson and James Greenleaf for the sum of five shillings; February 26, 1795, Watson sold his interest to Greenleaf, for £1,000; September 4, 1797, Greenleaf sold to Simeon Desjardines, for £19,400.

The belief was widely disseminated that Penet died before the conveyance by Duncan as his attorney to Watson and Greenleaf, the power of Duncan had ceased with the death of Penet, he could give no title, and Penet being an alien the title to this whole tract had escheated to the state, that it was anybody's land who first got possession, a wild

rush for land from all parts of this and adjoining states and from Canada, resulted, they had a law among themselves, holding by right of discovery or first occupation, ran possession lines by loping down bushes and small trees; these titles or claims were often sold or transferred by quit-claim deeds and contracts, some of which are still kept as relics and curiosities. Frequently these lines of claims were cut into, crossed, the land appropriated in whole or in part, by the loped bushes of a greedy and lawless rival, to settle the contention the trial by battle, as introduced in early England, by William the Conqueror, was resorted to, too determine who was the best man or had the superior title, these squatters had no idea of the cultivation of the land, as farmers they only wanted to fall the timber, convert it into staves, or burn it, and from the ashes make black-salts and pot-ash. This improvident waste of timber and the slovenly clearings made by this lawless set promised but little in the way of civilization; their appearance as they emerged from the swamps and hills, with an ox harnessed to a travois, laden with a trough of black-salts, pot-ash or staves, destined for the place of export, the mouth of French Creek, and thence to be smuggled to Canadian markets, as Penet had calculated and their return in like manner, with their product exchanged for a sack of meal, a chunk of pork and a jug of whiskey, was little calculated to inspire confidence in this tract as a place for a permanent home.

About two-fifths of Penet Square is now in the town of Clayton, except a small corner embracing Perch Lake, in the town of Pamela, the balance is in the town of Orleans. The first settlement on this square was made at the mouth of French Creek, about 1795, by adventurers from the older sections of this state, from New England, from Canada, by Oneida, St. Regis and Mohawk half breeds, as a place of refuge and hiding, their principal occupation was hunting, fishing, smuggling and other illicit business between and in Canada and the United States. Other settlements were made in the town of Clayton at Catfish Falls, now DePauville, from 1800 to 1803; in the town of Orleans, in 1806, north of the present village of Stone Mills, at Moulton's-later Rixford's Corners, and at Log Mills-now LaFargeville, the largest village on this territory, here, Dr. Reuben Andrus was the first physician his treatment was mild, his remedies simple, his pharmacopoeia not elaborate; bread pills were his favorite prescription for all ailments, with satisfactory results; on one occasion the doctor made a quantity of his panacea, put it out in the sunshine to dry, a peccoster running at large, ate the pills, flew to the roof of the shanty, flapped his wings strenuously crew more defiantly than ever-an omen followed by future Americans. Maj. Aivali Goodman was the first boniface, Esquire Lemuel Gearge was an early store-keeper. Reverend and revered "Josey" Williams, a faithful disciple of John Wesley, may well be termed the earliest vidette of his Master on this Square he labored with all of the zeal and impulsiveness of a Burchard or a Finney, without their pyrotechnic exhortations. He was often called the "Arch-Bishop of Penet."

In 1808 a road was cut through from the mouth of French Creek to the High Falls, because of the restrictive and for this region, almost destructive provisions of the Embargo Act of Congress, of the year before, was called the "Embargo Road"; this afforded transportation for the black-salts, pot-ash and staves of this tract and adjacent territory to the mouth of French Creek, and then to the Canadian markets, these people had to resort to this illicit method, though running great risk of arrest, confiscation and imprisonment, or starvation. This business was carried on with varying success, until the breaking out of the war of 1812, during which other occupations were resorted to. The principal event of that war in this territory was the rendering of a portion of the army composing the disastrous expedition of Wilkinson, against Canada, in French Creek Bay. In passing, it may be noted that the expedition of Sir Jeffrey Amherst in 1760 against LaPresentation-now Ogdensburg, and the strong Fort Levis, on Isle Royale now called Chimney Islands, and by the Indians, O-ra-co-nan-ton, the last military post of the French in North America, was directed to assemble in this Bay, a portion of the command lost its way, went down the Canadian channel and were wrecked and lost in the swift water between Gananoque and Mallorytown, and known to tourists through the Thousand Islands, as the "Lost Channel."

After the close of the war of 1812-15, a cloud of pretended claimants, came on to this Square, all pretending to hold title to the whole or a part of this tract, but who in reality had less title than the occupants, after much assertion, threats and bluster, they either left in disgust, or were run out by the occupants on a smooth pole. Among the most serious of these claimants was that of Hypolite Penet, of Delaware County, this State, a brother of Peter Penet. He claimed to inherit the property as the heir and next of kin of his brother; his claim was weakened if not dissipated by the fact he conveyed the whole tract to Tonelier of Schenectady for one dollar. From 1817 to 1823, by many prolix and bewildering conveyances this tract came to John LaFarge, a vivacious, unique and doughty Frenchman, of quick business instincts, well educated and very crafty, an appropriate successor of Penet. He was connected with a mercantile house of Havre, France, doing an extensive business with the West Indies and the United States; he became advised of the operations of Penet, his sudden death, without disposing of his holdings in the Oneida country, he became the nominal owner of the heir of Penet before mentioned. This gave him an apparent standing in the courts, and as expeditiously as possible made his appearance on Penet Square, became satisfied that it was valuable, and with proper management would in the not distant future, produce immense wealth. He found as there was no resident claimant or representative of any owner, squatters took advantage of the situation, located as they saw fit, bought and sold claims, cut the timber, converted it into staves, black-salts and potash, none of them having any title to the land, except the possession. This resulted from no knowl-



edge by them of the condition of the title to it, and because of the many claimants, none of whom could present any satisfactory evidence of their assertions, and subsequent abandonment, led to the belief that there was no legal owner of the tract, this induced large numbers, mostly of the poorer, thriftless and absconding classes from everywhere, to come, select land and make locations as before stated. Very few permanent improvements were made, the inhabitants living mostly in log shanties roofed with hollow logs split in two equal parts, laid interlocking; doors and floors of puncheons, a glass window, however small, was a luxury; but they were a hardy race, just the class of people to subdue that wilderness.

LaFarge comprehended the situation at once; he must become the absolute owner of this valuable territory; and for that purpose bought in all adverse claims possible. All who disputed his claims were subject to the annoyance of ejectment suits, which at that time if contested resulted against his claims; but all who recognized his title and ownership and accepted his contracts for the lands they occupied and lived up to the conditions thereof, never had any trouble with him; in fact he is reputed to have been fair and honorable with these. In order to perfect his title LaFarge allowed the whole tract to be sold for taxes by the State. It was bid in by him, and he obtained a Comptroller's deed therefor, executed by William L. Marcy, as Comptroller, dated May 13, 1828. It has been asserted and believed that sharp work and fine plans were resorted to by LaFarge and the State officials to accomplish this result, which would have surprised the adroit and lawless Penet, and the grafters of later days. After this had been done LaFarge pursued and cruelly harrassed those settlers who had resisted his demands. He compelled them to pay for not only the land, but for all of the improvements they had made on it, supposing it to be their own; he was extortionate and pursued them relentlessly, many were unable to meet these exactions, hurriedly left the town to avoid the debtors' prison; those who had property were stripped of it all to satisfy the judgments obtained against them; and upon the sales brought such prices as one pair of bulls \$12, one pair of steers \$8, one heifer \$3.50, eleven sheep \$11, and other property at like prices.

The title to the Square now recognized as settled, emigration became rapid, men who had fought in the Revolution with Herkimer at Oriskany, and with Willets at Fort Stanwix, and participated in the making and first unfurling of the American flag on land, in the free and pure air of their own Mohawk Valley; men from the mountains of Vermont and New Hampshire, who served with John Stark at Bennington, and witnessed the surrender at Saratoga, with their families and descendants, were the principal settlers and pioneers, their names were and now are familiar here, honored and respected.

LaFarge built, lived in and led a life of luxury, extortion and shame, in a fine mansion of chiseled limestone, at the head of Perch Lake on the extreme southern boundary of his domain, here he supposed he

was entirely free and unobserved from the prying eyes of an observant and busy world. Here he laid out a fine park with beautiful grounds and elegant private drives, making it a place befitting an honorable and respectable French gentleman. But in his privacy he was hounded and watched by his persecuted victims. The whizzing of bullets made it so uncomfortable for him that after several years he abandoned this beautiful but polluted place of abode. It was occupied but little after, it was regarded as deadly as the Upas-Tree; it soon without inhabitants ran to ruin, fell apart and into decay, so that now not one stone remains upon another to mark the place where it stood—it is a toft—the farmers have taken the stones for hog pens, stables and fences.

He removed to LaFargeville. Here he built a land office and a grist mill; at Moulton's Corners, about the center of this tract, he built a stone school house.

During the years 1830-32, LaFarge constructed a large and elegant mansion one mile south of LeFargeville, near Moulton's Corners, which he designed to make the finest private residence in the State. After its completion with its surroundings, it was thus described by a noted journalist: "The main body of the house is fifty feet square and two stories high, with handsome French windows to relieve the great expanse of roof, making it appear three stories high. It is built of hewn blocks of limestone, with battled walls, reaching high above the roof, terminating in four immense chimneys. On each end of the main part are large wings thirty feet square, of about half the height. A richly carved cornice ornaments the massive structure on the main part and wings. Great verandas ten feet wide and twelve feet high ornament the front. Through the massive entrance doors you enter a grand hall twelve feet wide, and extending through the entire width of the house, spanned by two elaborate arches resting on artistic carrels. In the rear of the hall is a heavy winding staircase, made of cherry and oak with hand carved ornamentations. The staircase is lighted by rear windows. On one side of the hall are double drawing rooms, finished in double architrave and fluted hand carved wood. The entrance to these rooms is through massive doors which roll so easily, a child may open them. Over the doors heavy ornate friezes rest on Corinthian columns on each side. On the other side of the hall heavy doors open into a reception room connected with a library ornamented in the same manner. Stucco ornamental work relieves every angle of the walls and ceilings. The beautiful centerpieces are carved by hand. The house is surrounded by an extensive park with fountains, pools and fish ponds, drives and flower beds filled with rare blooms; it is enclosed with cut stone capped and buttressed walls with graceful circles in which are hung large and small ornamental iron gates. A similar wall covered with slabs of cut stone, extended nearly a mile along the highway. The painting, decorating and frescoing in the mansion was done by an imported artist, skilled in that line of work. The fire places in the main rooms were built with mantels of fine



Italian marble, equipped with tall brass andirons, with protectors of brass in front." Here, after its completion, LeFarge lived in luxury, surrounded by his retainers, mostly profligate Frenchmen. He was never received socially or recognized as an equal by the LeRays, Survilliers, Pengnet, Real or other better class of French people who came to this county; he was regarded as a pariah, for the reasons that in France he was a tradesman and in this county he was reputed as living a dishonest and immoral life; however that may be he was a man of strong personality, methodical business ways and indomitable perseverance and courage, and has left his impress more firmly fixed upon his people than most of those who affected to despise him.

Soon after the completion of this mansion, and after furnishing it with the most magnificent furniture, rare and costly works of art and embellished with all that wealth and refined taste could suggest; LaFarge married a very highly cultured lady of refinement, in the City of New York, and brought her to this magnificent and princely furnished mansion in the wilderness. Yet with all of these beautiful surroundings, the social conditions, status and environment were so distasteful to her refined nature, that she compelled him to leave the country and to remove to New York, in 1838, where he ended his days.

After this LaFarge sold the mansion and farm to Bishop Dubois of the Roman Catholic Church, for a Seminary of that Church, and was there established under the name of the Seminary of St. Vincent de Paul, under the supervision of Father Francis Guth, of blessed memory, and several assistants, it was opened as a theological seminary and classical boarding school, but being so distant from the center of population, and so difficult of access, that after a struggle for three years, was removed by Archbishop Hughes, who succeeded Bishop Dubois, upon his death, to Fordham, Westchester County, and became St. John's College, a prosperous and noted institution of learning. After this the mansion and farm was occupied by a brother of the Archbishop—Patrick Hughes and family, as a home, his beautiful and accomplished daughter, Miss Margaret, here became the wife of Eugene Kelly, the opulent and well-known banker of New York. Miss Hughes gave this home the name of "Grove Mount," her correspondence and favors bore that appellation. She died in New York, her home, leaving benefactions and charities to many institutions and worthy persons, who hold her name in grateful remembrance. In after years, by marriage, death and removal, the Hughes people here became extinct, the old mansion tenantless, and for lack of care shabby, and exemplified the old maxim, "A pile without inhabitant to ruin runs."

By an act of the legislature of this state, passed April 3, 1821, the town of Orleans was created. It embraced all of Penet Square; it was an act of amnesty, restoration and pardon, and I might add of reconstruction. It declared, that all free male inhabitants in the town thereby created, shall be good and sufficient jurors in all courts within the County of Jefferson, in the same manner as if they were freeholders

in that town; that so much of the oath required by law to be taken by town officers, as to their being freeholders, may be omitted from the oaths to be taken by the town officers thereafter to be chosen in the said town of Orleans; thereby the highest rights of citizenship was conferred upon all free male inhabitants, within this territory, without reference to age, nationality, color or previous condition. As a large majority of the inhabitants of the new town were ineligible to office, or to the rights of a citizen, these unusual provisions were enacted to meet an emergency, that otherwise could not be easily avoided. By a law enacted in 1829, all that part of the town of Orleans, lying east of Perch Lake, being but comparatively a few acres of the square, was annexed to Pamela. Clayton was organized as a town by an act of the Legislature, passed April 27, 1833, and took from Orleans two-fifths of Penet's domain; so that this One Hundred Square Miles, embraced in three thriving towns of this county, with its remarkable history, the object of the greed and dishonesty, adroitness and rascality of its first owners, is now the equal and in many respects the superior of any rural territory of like size in the Nation, in the intelligence, enterprise and patriotism of its inhabitants; highly cultivated farms, thriving villages and happy homes; rich, fertile and inexhaustible soil, and the unsurpassed and well known quality of its products.

Contrasting Penet Square of today with it one hundred years ago, presents a marvelous change in the most wonderful century of the world's history; the home of the squalid and despised "Peneter" has become the pride and admiration of the entire county; surely the stone the builders rejected, has become the key-stone of the arch.

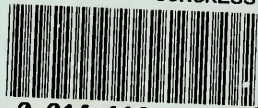
I have marshalled my statements from a variety of sources, diplomatic correspondence, Legislative enactments and suplications, historical sketches, private letters and correspondence, court records and recitals, Jesuit relations, fireside memories, romance and imagination.

I present them to you on this occasion, as a fit part of the observance of the closing first century of the existence of a beloved county, for your inspection, review and criticism. A recital of the plots and schemes, industry and intelligence of a hundred sleeping years.





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